

REMARKS/DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

By this Amendment, Applicants cancel claim 10 without disclaimer of the underlying subject matter or prejudice against subsequent prosecution. Applicants also amend the Title and the Abstract, and claims 1-9. Applicants also add new claims 11-19. Accordingly, claims 1-9 and 11-19 are pending in the application.

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner acknowledge the claim for priority and receipt of certified copies of all the priority documents, and also to indicate whether the drawings are acceptable.

Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested in view of the following Remarks.

OBJECTION TO THE TITLE

By this Amendment, Applicants amend the Title.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to the Title be withdrawn.

OBJECTIONS TO THE ABSTRACT

By this Amendment, Applicants amend the Abstract.

The Office Action also states that *"the abstract of the disclosure is objected to because the specification has spelling mistakes such as on page 4, line 18."*

Applicants fail to understand why this would raise an objection to the **abstract**. In any event, Applicants hereby amend the specification to correct the noted typographical error.

The Office Action also states that *"the abstract of the disclosure is objected to because the specification does not have headings."* Again, Applicants fail to understand why this would raise an objection to the **abstract**. Applicants thank the Examiner for providing information about recommended section headings. However, Applicants respectfully decline to add the headings. Section headings are not statutorily required for filing a non-provisional patent application under 35 USC § 111(a), but per 37 CFR § 1.51(d) are only guidelines that are suggested for

applicant's use. (See Miscellaneous Changes in Patent Practice, Response to comments 17 and 18 (Official Gazette, August 13, 1996) [Docket No: 950620162-6014-02] RIN 0651-AA75 ("*Section 1.77 is permissive rather than mandatory. ... [T]he Office will not require any application to comply with the format set forth in 1.77*")).

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objections to the Abstract be withdrawn.

OBJECTIONS TO THE CLAIMS

By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended and claim 10 is canceled.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claim objections are now moot.

Also, in view of the newly-submitted method claims 11-19, Applicants want to note that there is no requirement in U.S. patent law that a method claim include the word "step" in each recited operation that is included in the method.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objections to the claims be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. § 103

At the outset, Applicants note that the Office Action Summary indicates that claim 8 is rejected, but the Office Action does not clearly state any statutory basis for the rejection of claim 8. See, e.g., 37 C.F.R. § 1.104 and M.P.E.P. §§ 706.02(j).

The Office Action rejects: claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Applicants' Admitted Prior Art ("AAPA") in view of Yamana U.S. Patent Application Publication 2002/0184387 ("Yamana"), claims 2 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over AAPA in view of Yamana and further in view of Petite U.S. Patent 7,103,511 ("Petite"), claims 4 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over AAPA in view of Yamana and further in view of Van Der Veen U.S. Patent Application Publication 2001/00208317 ("Van Der Veen") and claims 6, 7 and 9 under 5 U.S.C. § 103 over AAPA in view of Yamana and further in view of Ohno U.S. Patent 4,697,187 ("Ohno").

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-9 are all patentable over the cited art for at least the following reasons.

Claim 1

Among other things, in the network of claim 1, each of the devices includes a master integral to the device for receiving control signals, and the network activates one of the masters as an active master for generating the command signals in response to the received control signals, and for transferring the command signals to the communication interfaces of the plurality of devices, and in case the active master fails, the network activates a second one of the masters as the active master for generating the command signals in response to the received control signals, and for transferring the command signals to the communication interfaces of the plurality of devices.

Applicants respectfully submit that no combination of the AAPA and Yamana would ever produce a communication network including this combination of features. For example, neither the AAPA nor Yamana discloses or suggests a plurality of devices in a network where each device includes a master integral thereto. Furthermore, it is noted that the cited portions of Yamana pertain to a communication router and a backup router that merely forward packets in the network messages. Yamana' routers are not masters that receive control signals, generate command signals in response to the received control signals, and transfer the command signals to the communication interfaces of the plurality of devices for controlling operations of the plurality of devices. Nothing in Yamana teaches or suggests that a communication network like that described in the AAPA should be modified such that each of the devices includes a master integral to the device for receiving control signals, and that the network should activate one of the masters as an active master for generating the command signals in response to the received control signals, and for transferring the command signals to the communication interfaces of the plurality of devices, and in case the active master fails, the network should activate a second one of the masters as the active master for generating the command signals in

response to the received control signals, and for transferring the command signals to the communication interfaces of the plurality of devices.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is patentable over the cited art.

Claims 2-7 and 9

Claims 2-7 and 9 all depend from claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that nothing in Petite, Van Der Veen, or Ohno remedies the deficiencies of the AAPA and Yamana as set forth above with respect to claim 1.

Accordingly, claims 2-7 and 9 are deemed patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1.

NEW CLAIMS 11-19

By this Amendment, Applicants add new claims 11-19.

Claim 11 depends from claim 1 and is deemed patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1, and for the novel features recited therein.

Among other things, the methods of claims 12-19 each include activating a master included in a first device to become an active master, detecting at a second device when the active master included in a first device fails, and in response thereto, activating a second master included in the second device to replace the active master and to respond to control signals by transmitting command signals to the plurality devices to control operations of the devices.

Applicants respectfully submit that no combination of the AAPA and Yamana would ever produce a method including this combination of features. For example, neither the AAPA nor Yamana discloses or suggests a method where masters included in a device is activated. Furthermore, neither the AAPA nor Yamana discloses or suggests a method where a second master in a second device replaces an active master in a first device when the active master fails. It is noted that the cited portions of Yamana pertain to a communication router and a backup router that

merely forward packets in the network messages. Yamana's routers are not masters that receive control signals, generate command signals in response to the received control signals, and transfer the command signals to the communication interfaces of the plurality of devices for controlling operations of the plurality of devices. Nothing in Yamana teaches or suggests that anything described in the AAPA should be modified to activate a master included in a first device to become an active master, to detect at a second device when the active master included in a first device fails, and in response thereto, to activate a second master included in the second device to replace the active master and to respond to control signals by transmitting command signals to the plurality devices to control operations of the devices. Therefore, claims 12-19 are all deemed to be patentable over the cited art.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing explanations, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and reexamine the present application, allow claims 1-9 and 11-19 and pass the application to issue. In the event that there are any outstanding matters remaining in the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact Kenneth D. Springer (Reg. No. 39,843) at (571) 283.0720 to discuss these matters.

Respectfully submitted,

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